

What to do if you have a tick bite

Remove the Tick

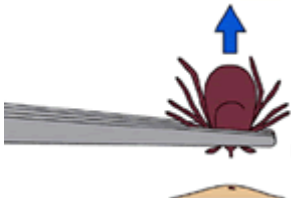
Try to remove the tick as soon as you discover it because prompt removal can prevent Lyme disease. It can take 36 hours for a tick to transmit the bacteria that causes Lyme disease to you.

To safely remove ticks:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers, or one of the many available tick removal tools, and firmly grasp the tick close to the skin. Avoid touching the tick with your bare hands.



2. With a steady motion, pull straight up until all parts of the tick are removed. Do not twist or jerk the tick. Do not be alarmed if the tick's mouthparts remain in the skin. Once the mouthparts are removed from the rest of the tick, it can no longer transmit the Lyme disease bacteria.



DO NOT use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish, or other products to remove a tick. These methods are not effective.

In a pinch, if you don't have tweezers with you when you find a tick, you can use a credit card to remove the tick. Slide the card between the tick and your skin and apply steady pressure. This usually causes the tick to release.

Thoroughly wash your hands and the bite area

After removing the tick, wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Clean the tick bite with soap and water or use an antiseptic such as iodine scrub or rubbing alcohol.

Watch for symptoms of tickborne diseases

If a tick is attached to your skin for less than 36 hours, your chance of getting Lyme disease is small. But just in case, monitor your health closely and be on the alert for symptoms of Lyme disease. Symptoms may begin as soon as 3 days after a tick bite or as long as 30 days after, but they usually appear within 1 to 2 weeks. Most other tickborne diseases occur within a few weeks of a tick bite. Contact your healthcare provider if you develop a rash or flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, joint pain, muscle aches and fatigue soon after a tick bite.

Testing the tick is not recommended

The Vermont Department of Health does not test ticks for Lyme disease and does not recommend that tick testing be done. There are several reasons for this:

- You may not have been infected.

Even if a tick is infected and tests positive, it may not have transmitted the infection to you. Ticks generally need to be attached to a human for at least 36 hours in order to transmit Lyme disease.

- It might delay treatment.

Tick test results take several days and may not be available in time to make a prompt treatment decision to prevent Lyme disease.

- You may have other tick bites that you don't know about.

Most people who are infected with Lyme disease do not recall a tick bite. Therefore, if someone were to develop symptoms of Lyme disease there would be no way to know whether the infection was from a known tick bite or another unknown tick bite. For example, if a tick is tested and the result is negative, you could still have been bitten by another infected tick, not know it, and develop symptoms of Lyme disease.

- Tests performed on ticks are not always perfect.

All laboratory tests have the possibility of false positive or false negative results. Even with a negative result, people should still monitor themselves for the appearance of a rash, fever, and other flu-like symptoms. If any of these symptoms occur, you should contact your healthcare provider.